

AD Care at Home During Social Distancing

Caregiving of a family member who has dementia has always been stressful, but for the last 12 years Gathering Places have been able to provide at least 40 hours a month of free respite. Now that government mandate has closed Gatherings temporarily because of the coronavirus, social isolation carries even more potential stress for a caregiver and the family member as well. Routine, meaningful activities, and companionship, which gives structure and comfort to a person with Alzheimer's, has been disrupted and it will be harder for the caregiver to take much needed breaks to refresh and relax.

Many caregivers fall into the higher coronavirus risk category—60+ with heart ailments, COPD, and/or diabetes—and are caring for persons generally healthier than they are. These caregivers need to take particular care to avoid infection by maintaining a sufficient distance from others who might carry the disease.



- Naturally, we are all somewhat fearful of exposure to the virus. However, it is important that you remain calm and take time to be loving and reassuring. Smile. Give hugs, hold hands.
- Assure your family member that you are going to be safe and that you will have some time to enjoy each other.
- Make sure that other family members understand the critical importance of remaining calm and pleasant. Your loved one may not fully comprehend the situation, but they will pick up on fear, frustration, or anger and be distressed. That distress lowers the immune system and it can exacerbate a memory disorder.

Plan activities for your family member and stress-busters for yourself.

For the family:

Access PBS at houstonpublicmedia.org. Check the week's schedule for Sit and Be Fit classes daily and do the exercises together. Find a documentary that your family member will enjoy—an hour or occasionally two—when you can lie down, or read, or catch up on chores. Amazon Prime also offers hundreds of free documentaries to stream.

Plan appropriate adventures

When weather permits, get outside at least once each day. Have a meal al fresco or create a small patio garden that your family member can water. Herbs and tomatoes would be fun to care for and harvest. Allow your family member to help you with household chores. He can help fold clothes, toss a salad, roll cutlery into napkins.

Avoid distress

The old westerns that many seniors gravitate to because of familiarity do not offer the stimulation that your loved one needs. Performances and documentaries are better. Eliminate violence and 10 o'clock news; the visuals are too disturbing.

For your family member:

The Gathering Place will provide free, stimulating activities each week by email. Activities will include memory retrieval, logic, math puzzles, and quizzes that will provide the stimulation and challenge your loved one needs.

Sign up: bmaust@sbcglobal.net.

For the caregiver:

If you've always had the TV on for noise, replace it with music to suit or enhance your mood.

Keep up with your friends by phone—not text or email—you need adult conversations with people who know and love you.

Choose Tai Chi, Qi Gong, or Yoga—order a DVD or stream lessons at least 3 times each week.

Start a gratitude journal. Spend at least 10 minutes daily in gratitude.

Select a chair you seldom use. Spend 5 to 10 minutes a day sitting in the chair vividly reliving a happy memory. Do this for a few weeks and muscle memory will take over. You will automatically relax and your mood will be boosted simply by sitting in the chair.

Find something—movies, a TV sitcom, a book, a Facebook group that makes you laugh every day.



For information and help, call
Dale Libby 979-236-5393
Brenda Maust 979-849-5051

www.gatheringplacebrazoria.org